

Kaleidoscope of flowers

The year 2020 is very troubling for everyone as the whole world is suffering from a pandemic. Every country is trying its best to cope and fight. People are succumbing to COVID-19 and our hearts go to the family.

During this pandemic, we are all trying our best to stay indoors to keep ourselves healthy. Some have become creative and found themselves embracing their dreams, which remained unfulfilled all these years. It may represent one's life-long passion for something or perhaps a reflection of creativity. Creativeness always brings joy and satisfaction. We are all creative in our own way.

I was going through my folders of pictures, which were shot while taking



vacations, family visits, and museum and garden tours. For the past several months, I did not have the audacity to make those trips due to lockdown. I try my best to keep myself busy after working remotely for five days. I started writing my journal, and one such recollection is penned here.

My trip to the museum during the "Fine Arts & Flowers" show has some great collection of pictures of floral interpretation of artworks by the different garden clubs of the city. I selected some photographs to share as well.

In October 2018, it returned with the spectacular flowers, artworks, speakers, luncheons, workshops, fashion shows and other special programs that visitors enjoyed since "The Council of VMFA" began

sponsoring this event in 1987. Different Garden Clubs of the city use fresh flower arrangements to interpret works of art in the VMFA collection. About 87 artworks, including paintings, sculptures, antique furniture, Faberge collection, and many others, were featured spreading all over the galleries of VMFA.

The exhibition kicked off with a Kaleidoscope of Flowers, a festive gala with dazzling lighting and colourful motifs transforming the Atrium into a three-dimensional kaleidoscope of beauty.

Flower arrangement is an art. It not only includes floral blooms, but the container that holds them and the base on which the container may rest. But when the floral designers use fresh

flowers to interpret the works of arts of the museum collection, the floral interpretation of each art work becomes a rare beauty to watch.

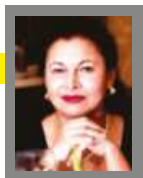
Since we are all on lockdown, we can use our time in a positive way and be optimistic during the time of pandemic. We can also choose a painting or any artwork from the website and practice interpreting the artwork with flowers or any objects which we have available at home. This will help us be creative as well.

I randomly chose some of the following floral interpretations of the art works by the garden clubs to share with readers.

By Aeman T Rasul
Photo: Aeman T Rasul

THOUGHT CRAFT

BY NASRIN SOBHAN
Freelance Writer



Finding solace in books during times of strife

There is nothing book lovers like better than to curl up in a comfortable corner somewhere and immerse themselves in the pages of whatever book takes their fancy, and drift away into a different world.

In these sombre times when people are suffering, and almost every day brings news of someone passing away or falling ill, we need to help anyway we can to those we know, stay safe ourselves and above all, keep our spirits up, especially those of us who are vulnerable and house-bound. It is sometimes hard to find ways to pass the time, but all it requires is a bit of imagination. I for one wake up in the morning and count my blessings every moment of every day.

One of the comforts of these lush summer days when there is greenery everywhere, and we can sit somewhere near a window hearing the leaves rustle in the wind, a sound so soft as to be almost hypnotic, it is easy to let fall the book from our hands and just gaze out at the view, grateful for the beauty of the season, the flowers in full bloom and the lush fruit that we can almost see ripening on the trees.

The best days for reading are the rainy

days. One of my old cooks, named Abdul, would come in and say, "Today it looks like rain, should we have khichuri?" He always made us our preferred one, soft and mushy, garnished with green chillies and butter, accompanied by a good Kachumber salad.

But to return to the books and our cosy corner, in my childhood, I loved Emily Bronte and her 'Wuthering Heights,' and Sydney Carton in 'A Tale of Two Cities.' For complex stories, when I was a little older, I discovered Dorothy Dunnett and her 'Lymond' series, and for English light humour, Jilly Cooper. Still later, I began to love Stephen Leacock for his amazing humour. I could go on forever.

Recently, I have taken up again my oldest love, history and historical fiction. I have managed to read some books on Bengal, a trilogy by Hilary Mantel on the life of Thomas Cromwell, followed by Robert Graves writing on T E Lawrence and the Arabs.

When I read history, I am transported through time, and it becomes so intense and personal an experience that it is as if I was there myself. I grieved for Cromwell, the most competent minister King Henry

ever had, who devoted his life to his King, and got beheaded for his pains. I was devastated by the death of Prince Mustapha, executed by his father Suleiman the Magnificent.

I grieved for Sharif Husain, his sons, and Lawrence, who put their faith in the integrity and good faith of the British and the French. The arbitrary creating of unrealistic borders in the Middle East has been a source of hatred, resentment and contention ever since. For laypersons like me, it is so clear that cynical actions by the powerful, regardless of the time frame, can have consequences far beyond their lifetimes. We can see the results of those actions even today.

Worst of all in today's world is the hatred and racial prejudice that permeates so much in society. There is universal education in many countries in the world, but still, the ignorance continues. The world looks on in shock as the killing and incitement to violence and the demonising of 'the other' for political ends is exploited to the utmost whenever possible.

More objectively, and without getting quite so involved, I like reading the columns of David Brooks and George F

Will. Their politics aside, I admire their erudition and clear thinking. Most of all, I respect and admire Noam Chomsky. We all need to be reminded of the importance of moral integrity and the consequences of a compromise with, or a loss of, that moral compass which define us as sapient beings.

Chomsky reminds us of the pitfalls of complacency, political cynicism and lack of foresight when governing and planning for the world we hope to leave for our grandchildren. And the saddest part is that it is just for forty pieces of silver, to quote an old familiar phrase.

I feel nothing but sadness at the loss of so many of the hopes and dreams of our generation for a better world. All that comes to mind at this time, COVID aside, is Brave New World by Aldous Huxley, the film Fahrenheit 451, and 1984 and Animal Farm by George Orwell who predicted these times many years ago. And finally, I shall never forget the writings of the late great Edward Said, the voice for the people of Palestine.

Martin Luther King said "I Have a Dream." Will it ever be possible to achieve that dream?